

Accomac's Long Journey of Troubles Ends

By John Frye
Special Correspondent

FLEETON — The long weary journey of the Accomac is over, with a cutting torch finally reducing her to 12,000 tons of scrap in a Mallows Bay scrap yard 80 miles up the Potomac River.

The Accomac, rusty hulk of a once busy ferry that plied between the lower Virginia Eastern Shore and Norfolk, reached the yard in late November despite a series of misfortunes that fully documented the workings of Murphy's Law and the scientific principle of "perversity of inanimate objects."

All that remained to wind up the adventure was for the scrap yard operator, Capt. John S. Fiocca of Clinton, Md., to come back, probably this weekend, to his interim salvage headquarters at the Fleeton Point Marina to pick up his barge with back hoe aboard before winter storms added more trouble for him.

J. E. LaPrade, marina proprietor, reported that he had, at Fiocca's telephoned request, drained the back hoe's radiator against freezing, but that the barge had taken some water and

ALSO REMAINING, on the beach in the Little Wicomico River just inside the jetties at the mouth was a vividly painted New England lobster boat in which two young men, whose names were never known here were adventuring their way south.

They happened in at the Fleeton Point Marina just when Fiocca needed help on his hope of starting to cut up the Accomac while she lay aground, her second stop, in Chesapeake Bay off Fleeton Beach. He hired them and planned to tow their boat with the Accomac, thinking they could be on their way to

Florida or the West Indies in a few days.

Now, LaPrade reported Fiocca said he intended to keep them on and take them to Florida himself.

The log of the Accomac from mid-September when she left Norfolk under tow by Fiocca's 250-horsepower diesel tug Hemco, would read something like this.

Sept. 19—Engine trouble on Hemco; Accomac drifted aground off Dameron's Marsh Chesapeake Bay, just south of the mouth of the Great Wicomico River. Hemco left to get repairs;

watchman aboard Accomac.

Oct. 2—Accomac broke free in southerly blow; drifted toward mouth of Great Wicomico and seemed headed also for mouth of Cockrell's Creek, then veered northeast to ground again between Fleeton Beach and the offshore Wicomico light. Hemco and Coast Guard unable to tow her off.

Nov. 3—Aided by unusually high tide, Hemco got Accomac free, resumed towing toward Smith Point, mouth of Potomac River. Grounded again in shoals between shore and Smith Point Light-house, two miles offshore.

Nov. 4—Accomac freed again, with boost from swiftly rising southwest gale, but soon out of control. Almost rammed Hemco and was cut loose to drift across mouth of Potomac toward Point Lookout, Md., finally coming aground for fourth time off Smith Island, Md.

THERE, ACCORDING to watermen's stories to the Maryland marine police, Fiocca came out and put a dog aboard as watchman, with plenty of food pending his return. Smith Island watermen, hearing the dog bark when they came close, soon made friends with it by

means of shared lunches, and went aboard themselves for inspection.

Fiocca and the Hemco finally got her free again and headed up the Potomac, arriving at Mallows Bay late this month.

However, not without incident, for he said the Hemco's engine had "thrown a rod" and had to be fixed again. When all that is in hand, he is expected to return here to pick up his barge and back hoe.

Meanwhile LaPrade hopes to find time to go up to the Little Wicomico, retrieve the psychedelic lobster boat if it will float, and bring it here too.

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